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FOR EAGER LOVERS

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FOR EAGER LOVERS

By
GENEVIEVE TAGGARD



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ADD
STACHS

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TO
ROBERT L. WOLF

"Tell me if the lovers are losers . . ."

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THE WAY THINGS GO

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THE FUTILE

*The stone falls, the bird flies, the arrow goes home,
But we have no motion, we scatter like foam.*

O, give me a song to sing for your sorrow,
A song that will lift, like a wave from the reef,
You and myself, that will fling like an arrow
My poor scattered words to the target of grief:
I want to forget, to remember no morrow,
To go with the petrel, to go with the leaf. . . .

We would fly with all things to the goal of their flying,
We would turn with all things to the magnetic star,
But we never can live, because of our dying,
And we never can be, for the things that we are.

*We alone of all creatures—the stones more than we—
Have no end, no motion, no destiny.*

VERY YOUNG LOVE

Wishes are birds. You have been circled round
With them, invisible, I sent you in distress,
Flown from my heart that long had held them bound,
Surpassing winds in their sharp eagerness.

You have not seen their dim shades on the ground;
Nor heard them: never felt their pinions press
Beating the air, but never making sound,
And hanging over you in breathlessness.

So, with you here, the trembling little words
Lie down like frightened children in the dark,
Lie down and weep; and wishes winged like birds
Fly crowding back; with this the only mark
That I have almost told you breathless things:
You hear the weary folding-down of wings.

FIRST MIRACLE

There was a time when Mother Nature made
My soul's sun, and my soul's shade.

A cloud in the sky could take away
The song in my heart for all day,

And a little lark in a willow-tree
Would mean happiness to me.

My moods would mirror all her whims;
Trees were my strength: their limbs, my limbs.

But, oh, my mother tortured me,
Blowing with wind, and sighing with sea.

I flamed, I withered, I blossomed, I sang,
With her I suffered pang for pang,

Until I said: "I will grow my own tree
Where no natural wind will bother me."

And I grew me a willow of my own heart's strength,
With my will for its width, and my wish for its length:

And I made me a bird of my own heart's fire,
To sing my own sun, and my own desire.

And a vast white circle came in the air,
And the winds around said, "Don't blow there."

I said, "Blow on—blow, blow, blow, blow,
Fill all the sky, above, below,
With tempest, and sleet, and silence, and snow!

"Wherever I go, no matter where,
My bird and my willow-tree are there.

"However you frown, no matter how,
I will sing as I am singing now."

TROPICAL GIRL TO HER GARDEN

Withhold your breath!

Heavy in noon, and sleepy as slow death,

Garden of sweets and sours,

The cluster of my body hangs

Odorous with flowers:

Stamen serpent-fangs,

Sultry, in showers.

Withhold your hand!

My boughs are bent with gold, my face is fanned

With wings of bees that, thirsting, curve and kiss;

Under green leaves, green tendrils coil and hiss;

Sun spills on me, gloom bears me down too much;

My heavy fruit will fall without a touch

From hanging long in sultriness like this.

JUST INTRODUCED

Only a few hours!
We danced like wind,
Our faces like noon flowers
On one slim stem were lifted, turned aside.
You flew, I followed, matched your stride,
And held your pause, and swung and parted wide. . . .

Only a few hours!
We danced like wind,
Thirsty as blown flowers,
Heavy lidded, fearful eyed.

THIRST

There is a bird that hangs head-down and cries
Between the mango leaves and passion vines.
Below, a spotted serpent twines
And blunts its head against the yellowing skies.
Along the warping ground a turtle scrapes,
And tortured lie glazed fishes in marsh grass.
Across the sky that burnishes like brass
A bat veers, stupid with the yeast of grapes.

BEACH CABIN

I dreamed you were the sea;
I dreamed you pounded
With foamy fists, the sad face of the shore.
Waking, I lay beneath you,
And the room resounded
With the hoarse fury of the mounting ocean's roar.

MARRIED

Your face from my face slips,
Lover of my lips.
Holder of my heart,
For all our close companionships,
We are apart.
Apart, apart, we are apart.

Crying beauty leaves me dumb,
Your fire, cold and still.
I watch the hours of morning come
And always will,
With this dull agony in my heart—
We are apart.

Strong, solemn, stupid-kind ;
Parting, we leave behind
Silence, where our foot-steps sound
Dead on the hollow ground.

With a singing river I used to run
Wild with wonder : now
There is no river, there is no sun,
Only an old vow.

And this dull chant goes through my head,
And this dull moan sinks in my heart:
Half of my body must be dead,
We are apart.

LEAVE ME ALONE A LITTLE

Leave me alone a little!
Must I be yours,
When all my heart is pouring with the sea
Out to the moon's impersonal majesty?

Leave me alone! My little vow endures
Men's irritating love, surviving yours!
Surviving all, surviving even you.
Leave me alone. This is no rendezvous:
I am not false except with my old sea and moon.

You understand me? Wait behind the dune?
Oh, level glow, oh, soft, soft-spoken sea—
Leave me alone. Why will you follow me!

BLACK LAUGHTER

Harsh, unuttered thunder
Stood like a stone wall
Above the marsh's silver line.
Crooked cranes, white as lightning—
Flattened for an instant, flashing from the cloud—
Came driving toward us; toward us fell
The long lines of the shade-laden trees,
Soundless slanting thunder:
And the snail-like hills
Dragged nearer
The marsh's slime.

Borne down so
By sullen immensities,
Two caught children we stood,
Waiting the flash, the oblique arm of the parent,
Waiting for speech from the jowl
Of the irritated horizon. . . .

Our love began
Between flash and crash,—
Terror seen and terror heard.
See what a cripple our love is!
It is sullen; sometimes it makes walls of black laughter;

It is fond of words, fond of thick vowels,
It mimics thunder.
Between us it limps:
We wait for it, when we must, faces averted.

THE QUIET WOMAN

I will defy you down until my death
With cold body, indrawn breath;
Terrible and cruel I will move with you
Like a surly tiger. If you knew
Why I am shaken, if fond you could see
All the caged arrogance in me,
You would not lean so boyishly, so bold,
To kiss my body, quivering and cold.

I HAVE MOVED WEST

I have moved west, I travel with the sun ;
You cannot hold, you cannot hinder me.
There are no ends for what I have begun—
There are no resting places where I run,
Until I am surrendered to the sea.

III

ENDLESS CIRCLE

The tree we lay under
The thunder, the thunder
Of my heart, and your wonder
And our weeping . . .

Now we are old, we are worn, we are weary of sleeping;
There's an end to all sorrow, there must be an end to
our weeping:
Come with me, run with me, find with me, laughing
and leaping—

*The tree we lay under,
The thunder, the thunder
Of my heart, and your wonder—
And our weeping.*

SYMBOL SUMMARY

Up that thin river, going over sand—
Down that deep river, purple to the sun;
My fingers fire; cool your quiet hand,
And your voice sad, and mine the ardent one. . . .

So, silver-thin, the flute-like running river
Threaded the sea-set purple stream; and we
Sat mingling voices solemn and a-quiver
Until we struck the storm,—and heard the sea.

LITTLE HAMLET

Over you, over you, over,
I hang like a wave, like a lover,
Like a scimitar edged with hate;
Too heavy with grief to be straight
And far,
Too frail to ever discover
How to fall like a wave or a lover—
Or a blue-thin scimitar.

THE ENAMEL GIRL

Fearful of beauty, I always went
Timidly indifferent:

Dainty, hesitant, taking in
Just what was tiniest and thin;

Careful not to care
For burning beauty in blue air;

Wanting what my hand could touch—
That not too much;

Looking not to left nor right
On a honey-silent night;

Fond of arts and trinkets, if
Imperishable and stiff

They never played me false, nor fell
Into fine dust. They lasted well.

They lasted till you came, and then
When you went, sufficed again.

But for you, they had been quite
All I needed for my sight.

You faded. I never knew
How to unfold as flowers do,

Or how to nourish anything
To make it grow. I wound a wing

With one caress, with one kiss
Break most fragile ecstasies. . . .

Now terror touches me when I
Dream I am touching a butterfly.

FOREVER LOST

Forever lost—like birds forever flying,
Searching bleak space,
Circling, and with the south wind crying
Across earth's face:

Arrowed I fly, and like them lost forever,
Having once seen
Scarlet in a jungle, by a deep river—
Scarlet and green.

FOR EAGER LOVERS

I understand what you were running for,
Slim naked boy, and why from far inland
You came between dark hills. I know the roar
The sea makes in some ears. I understand.

I understand why you were running now
And how you heard the sea resound, and how
You leaped and left your valley for the long
Brown road. I understand the song

You chanted with your running, with your feet
Marking the measure of your high heart's beat.
Now you are broken. Seeing your wide brow
I see your dreams. I understand you now.

Since I have run like you, I understand
The throat's long wish, the breath that comes so quick,
The heart's light leap, the heels that drag so sick,
And warped heat wrinkles, lengthening the sand. . . .

Now you are broken. Seeing your wide brow
I see your dreams, understanding now
The cry, the certainty, wide arms,—and then
The way rude ocean rises and descends. . . .

I saw you stretched and wounded where tide ends.
I do not want to walk that way again.

ANGULAR

Other hearts have broken gracefully, for your sake,
And now your eyes reproach me that my ache
Is awkward, and my arms
Are angular across my breast
Where emptiness is pressed.

POET IN THE BASEMENT

Only to tell your loveliness—this love:
Only to tell
Pain's odor, beauty-burning miracle
Of my surrender!
Late I flew . . .
But ever arrow-straight
I fly now from the shade that falls—that fell
Lightly on you,
On me with a wave's weight.

Oh, I must go: this city has a spell
I never gave it leave to have. Still, still to tell
The weaving of your footsteps on the stairs
With my slow-dropping love for you that wears
Cold stone I want my heart for—still I stay.
Put out the stars. Give me another day
Only to tell.

SEA-CHANGE

You are no more, but sunken in a sea
Sheer into dream, ten thousand leagues, you fell ;
And now you lie green-golden, while a bell
Swings with the tide, my heart : and all is well
Till I look down, and wavering, the spell—
Your loveliness—returns. There in the sea,
Where you lie amber-pale and coral-cool,
You are most loved, most lost, most beautiful.

TIRED GIRL

Put her away some place between two hills,
Away from the sea and the sun.
She has so much to think of—must she run
On your bright bosom always, Mother Earth?
Put her away, and let some other birth
Bring her back to the sound of the sea, and the sun.
After she ponders under silent hills,
Beneath your swarming bosom, Mother Earth,
She will have words for her beloved one.

UNACKNOWLEDGED DEDICATION

These were his songs. Now he has broken them.
All he has made, that has he also slain :
Seeing my beauty budding, broke the stem ;
Finding his likeness here, where he has lain,
Finding the flame of his hurt spirit here
In this small pool that motioned with his shade,
Seeing himself, he smote me with his fear—
He only lives to break what he has made.

All, all he fathered, all that lived by him,
Shut from his face with banging of loud doors.
The sun, losing his spirit, now is gone dim ;
Only the sea that roared before, still roars.

Now it is time to go, softly away ;
We will grow fragile, songs, soon we will fade.
He has no place for us, we cannot stay—
He cannot bear the beauty he has made.

Where will we go, my songs, under the sun ?
There is no place to go, no, there is none.
The sea is scornful of our sufferings.
The sea is like him, careless of all things,
Beating her own, and mourning that they die.

All things are like him—beautiful they lie
Pressing their image wildly on our grief,
Prone in their beauty, terrible and brief,
And when they face us, bitterly afraid,
They cannot bear the beauty they have made.

Where will we go, my songs? He does not know
Your faces any more, or love your lips.
We are too frail to last. There will be snow,
The noise of rivers, and the winter's whips.
To wind and water we will give our woe
That once made music. Let them follow him.
When all the sky is darkened at the rim
And he and we have stumbled in its shade,
No one will know the beauty he has made.

INDIAN SUMMER

In that day
Everyone will sing,
Everyone will play in that day;
There will be carolling.

You will make poems for your neighbor's child;
Woods will grow wild.

In that day
Men will not pray,
Men's hearts will never know
Struggle and woe.
Lovers will be
Simple and free;
On warm fall nights, men's sweethearts will conceive.

No one will grieve,
No one grow gray;
Feet will not go
Wandering, in that day,
Save on one quest
Older than they:
Across one threshold—an unbidden guest.

TALKING WATER

If you will poise your forefoot in my pool,
I will not loose a ripple, Beautiful.
Crackle the fern-stems, arch aloft and stare,
See! there's no fright for you, anywhere.
A leaf shall not lift, nor a shade shake
You and your shy love away from my lake.
I know the noon is ablaze for you,
This gaunt forest, a maze for you:
Kneel near this drop of water on stone,
No one comes plunging. You are alone.
To-day I am opal, tinged with blue,
My color deepens with the glassy heat,
And I listen for hoofs. Am I timid, too?
Noon is my enemy! Thrust in your feet!
Trample this silver, trample this sand,
I will not startle you, Little One; stand
Slim as the larch, there, I'll not take
Even your shade to the naked ache
Of my lessening waters. If you lean,
Another faun, like you, but green
Will flick his ears and curve his throat,
His shadow hoof will lift between
These pebble-splotches. Will you float,
Mingle and drowse and touch me, Beautiful?
If you come down some blown noon to my pool,
I will be quiet, I will be cool.

BOYS AND GIRLS

THE SUN CHILD

Boys and girls, come out to play:
The sun is up, the wind's astray,
Early morning's gold is gone—
(They slumber on, they slumber on.)

*I have never done with you
Half the things I want to do.*

I will put kisses on your knees,
And we will squander as we please
This lovely, little lazy day!

Ninety million miles away
The sun halloos: "Come out to play;
The winds are prancing on tip-toe,
Impatient with long waiting so;
The hills look up. Come out and oh,
Let your bodies dart and run
While I make shadows," says the sun.

Boys and girls, come out to play
Before the river runs away,
*I have never done with you
Half the things I want to do. . . .*

THE SUN

Boys and girls, come out to play
Before the river runs away,

While you are fluid, unafraid,
Beneath my light and shadow skim,
Before this folded gloom is dim
And limb no longer follows limb
Dancing under spotted shade.

For dancing were your bodies made:
Before the roses of you fade,
Find your meaning for the mouth
While I lean south; while I go west,
Find your meaning for the rest.

THE SUN CHILD

Throw back your head and fly with me—
Love me, chase me, lie with me;
Follow, sweetheart of the sun,
Turn and follow where I run
Between blue vineyards and fruit-trees—
Fall down and kiss me on the knees!
Pant beside me while I pull
Berries for you from the full
Blue-jeweled branches. Crush them red,
Not on your mouth—on mine instead!

THE SUN

Nimble you move—you are my own,
My pliant essence. All alone,
On fire in the passive sky
I burn—a stone, a golden stone;
Together, you in double shade
Discover why your limbs were made.

THE SUN CHILD

I have never done with you

Half the things I want to do.

Link your arms and loosen them,

Pluck and suck a grass's stem.

Touch my breasts with that blue aster,

Kiss me fast—I'll kiss you faster!

Link your arms and loosen them.

Now link your arms like mine together,

Toward me lightly, like a feather,

Dance. Like feathers you'll be blown.

Across the level field alone,

And like a brown wing my bare feet

Will skim the meadow till we meet.

The river skips, but we are quicker:

Its little body's slender glisten

Goes down alley-ways of leaves.

Flicker, sun, and river, flicker;

Listen, lover, listen, listen

How the river laughs and grieves. . . .

I have never done with you

Half the things I want to do.

Leap for me, sweetheart, reach and try

To catch me, sweetheart; kiss and cry

After me, sweetheart, darting by.

After you seize me, we will lie,

I in the grass, you in the sky;

After you kiss me, we will start
To try and reach each other's heart,
And searching frantically find
The unseen blisses of the blind.

THE SUN CHILDREN

Before the river runs away,
Boys and girls, come out to play.
(They slumber on, they slumber on,
Morning's glint is almost gone.)
With yellow bubbles fill your veins
Before the lusty day-star wanes.
(They slumber on, they slumber on,
Silken leopard noon is gone.)
Die you may, die you must—
Fill your mouths with pollen dust;
~~Calyxes~~ and honey-thighs
Both will wither. Beauty dies.
Find out why mouths are berry-red
Before you stiffen in your drab bed.
Over you humming summer will glide,
You'll never lie languid on your side,
And listen then as you listen now
To half-heard melodies; oh, how
The river runs and runs and runs
Fluid with splendor, and the sun's
Circuit is singing. Fragile day!
Boys and girls, come out to play!

FROST IN THE AIR

Winter put his shoulder
 To our door,
Nights are turning colder
 More and more;
We are old—or older
 Than before.

*Poppied sleep and honeyed breath
Are an antidote for death.*

If your fingers tingle
 Hold them here:
Doom has drawn a single
 Circle clear;
Lean to me and mingle
 Fear with fear. . . .

*Poppied sleep and honeyed breath
Are an antidote for death.*

EVERYDAY ALCHEMY

Men go to women mutely for their peace ;
And they, who lack it most, create it when
They make—because they must, loving their men—
A solace for sad bosom-bended heads. There
Is all the meager peace men get—no otherwhere ;
No mountain space, no tree with placid leaves,
Or heavy gloom beneath a young girl's hair,
No sound of valley bell on autumn air,
Or room made home with doves along the eves,
Ever holds peace like this, poured by poor women
Out of their heart's poverty, for worn men.

EPITHALAMIUM

Out of the forest, panther, come,
Silken, supple, silent, lone—
Out of the forest, drooped with night—
To your delight.
Under bloom and over stone,
Out of the forest, panther, come.

Something sees and slips with you,
Something huge and gaunt and blue,
Lashes its tail and follows you:
You, pursued, still pursue. . . .

Sky with thunder on its rim
Closes and closes after you:
Trigger loin, swinging limb,
Go and go and go from him!
Brushing haunches, taut with dew,
Follow, follow, follow you.

Now the doe with lifted ears
Rears in the bramble, looks and hears.
Sway a little, creeper, creeper;
After you comes, more gaunt than you
And lean for prey, and quick, the leaper,
—And the little doe will sleep with the sleeper.

Out of the forest, panther, come,
Silken, supple, silent, lone,
Out of the forest, drooped with night,
To your delight:
Under bloom, and over stone,
Out of the forest, panther, come.

SPRING TOUCH

How tender-mad the little meadows lie!
The wobbling lambs are tasting milky weeds,
The tipsy trees
Are leaned like foam on green, wind-gullied seas;
The pale moth flutters where the pale moth leads,
And you, swimming the sky
Waist deep in surf of apple-blossoms—I,
Sweet to your thigh,
Take the new tingle of your froth of seeds.

THE LONG MAGIC

Swing, swing, and swoon,
Morning, evening, noon,

And with night, sleep.

If you must, weep—
But here, here with me.

Swing like the sea
Where waves are tall;
Torrents and the three
Tides fall. . . .

Let the end be
With the last sweep:
Swoon, swoon with me—
Then sleep.

WITH CHILD

Now I am slow and placid, fond of sun,
Like a sleek beast, or a worn one:
No slim and languid girl—not glad
With the windy trip I once had,
But velvet-footed, musing of my own,
Torpid, mellow, stupid as a stone.

You cleft me with your beauty's pulse, and now
Your pulse has taken body. Care not how
The old grace goes, how heavy I am grown,
Big with this loneliness, how you alone
Ponder our love. Touch my feet and feel
How earth tingles, teeming at my heel!
Earth's urge, not mine—my little death, not hers;
And the pure beauty yearns and stirs.

It does not heed our ecstasies, it turns
With secrets of its own, its own concerns,
Toward a windy world of its own, toward stark
And solitary places. In the dark,
Defiant even now, it tugs and moans
To be untangled from these mother's bones.



ICE AGE

ICE AGE

Noiselessly the planets will blow by,
Like smoke, like breath, like driven snow ;
Frost-bitten suns on on, on on will blow ;
Over earth's curve, the moons, like birds, will fly.
Making no noise and only vague shadow.

And spider snow will spin and spin
A tangle of frost to snare earth in.

Little earth, then,
Will house few men :
Little earth, shrunken—
No longer drunken
Purple, splendid, roistering earth ;
Little earth hung
With pearls of seas,
Little earth shivering,
About to freeze.

And through her veins, caught in this web,
Life and color and sound will ebb.

There will be faint tints, none
From the center of the sun.

There will be light noises, no
Sound harsher than snow.

Never a sound of thunder or river,
Torrent or stone—
Only vague breath from the old life-giver,
Making her own
Final, lingering filigree
Of frost, blown
On the glass of the sky, in planet and tree,
An icicle moon, a torrent and three
Glittering stars half-grown;
A slight tone
Rippling sound into the stilling river,
The crisp sea.

And spider snow will spin and spin
A tangle of cold to catch earth in.

Morning's red yawn,
Evening's pain,
Never will startle the earth, then;
Pure from her stain,
Her garments discarded or cleansed by the cold clean
hands of the rain.

A leaf's lines, a stem's tints,
Make in icy places, prints;
Trace of a foot, of a hooked claw,
Settled to stone since the last thaw;

Minnows bent with wavering
Along a pool's ice-edges cling.

All the beautiful, brave
Colors that curled in the wave—
Flooding ground purple and crimsoning air—
Are battered and rigid and bare.

Earth, bled of her sap,
Too stiff to unfold
The sprouted mold
In the cleft of her lap;

While circles woven nearer now
Hang cold broodings on her brow.

Still, then crackling—once more still—
Icy feet come up the hill.

Pushing back the granite fright
Men sing morning and sing night!

Only singing matters now,
With stark birds on every bough.

Carolling for morning, carolling for noon:
Stiff tasks done with a tiny tune,
And never a note
In timbre any bigger than the tone of a flute—
Little sounds only, coming in your throat,
And the big sounds mute.

Thinner, rarer and more shrill,
As silence whitens on the hill :
Whistling in daylight to keep up nerve,
While blue whiteness comes up the curve.

Bravado of sparse breath
Blown straight at death ;
Voices in silences, swooping like birds,
Voices and carolling,
Warm words.
Flung at the sky's stiff stare—
Into the brittle air—
A laugh like a torch's flare. . . .

Desperate gaiety and games,
And pleasantries for comfort like wan flames,
Will be their only way,
For, in the midst of play—
Pause—a long sway,
Something faltering underneath,
The brief
Gasp of the breath, eye's blur,
Blunder of mortal fingers, words too thick to say,
Slight motions underneath the gray
Faces of cloud,
And carolling, carolling, carolling loud,
To keep the cold away.

Some will slouch,
Lazy, brave ;
Others crouch
In a hidden cave,

Hearing near and hearing far
Heavy steps from feet of stone
Tread the warping fields alone—
Hearing far and hearing near
The wind's hiss in earth's ear—
Feel
Ground fall, and ground reel,
Brittle footsteps steal
Up the hill and down the cliff,
Touching, snapping, making stiff;
While granite footsteps, grinding numb,
Up the little hollow come.

Not to give in,
Men will go on
Making vague love, kissing wan
Faces. Trying to make
Children with women,
Trying to wake
Hints of old hunger—bitterly break
Flesh that turns marble-hard—trying to take
Life in their arms for their brief comfort's sake.

Women will not move as move
Those confident of love:
Hurt, like a torpid snake,
Agony drags and stirs but cannot wake.

So they will pass their days,
Fostering a child or two—giving names
Of half-remembered music, clamor, sound;
Over hunched shoulders peering round

For cold that creeping comes ;
Over and over saying tropic words,
And calling babies after jungle-birds.

They will be cheered with each new child ;
And the weird
Pall of the sky, and the wild
Tangle of hooped moons piled
Like rubbish in the pallid west,
Won't trouble them so much
With what they feared :
They'll touch
Cautiously their children and their lovers—clutch
Anything alive.

Not to give in,
Men will go on,
Cold to the chin—
Light-stepping for fear,
Feeling the thin
Ice of the air crack under the weight
Of feather-poised earth, and the near
Nuzzle of snow, and the wind's spear.

Smoke from fire
And ice's smoke
Lunge together,
Fight and choke,
Plunge and throttle and fight, and all
Blue smoke vanishes. Ashes fall.

Some will call the skimming planets, cranes
Going south for winter—nothing more;
And some will sow the icy fields with grains,
Search barren pools,
Harvest sea-weed, plant a pebble, or
Plow snow with patient tools.

And they will never cease to look for spring:
Climb endless hills,
And turn from east to west and west to east;
Imagining the least
Shreds of far color,
Supposing that they feel
Warmth on their faces, following the wheel
Circling on its axis, they will search the sky
For sign of thaw or rain, or any change—
Looking for birds, where only dead stars fly
And calling snows, and deepening snow falls, strange.

In tightening silence, they will search for sound;
Beneath the smother of the sky
Find tangled iron, as the first men found
Iron and more than mortal sinew in the ground.

And they will worship symbols of sure things—
Sure things, and tangible, cut clear.
Forgetting rust, they will keep iron near,
And try to pour into an iron mold
The past's white fire, perishing with cold.

And out of iron's touch upon their palms
Will come a song.
And they will seize stone hammers, make a clang,
Sing as they never sang—
Wild, assaulting, strong;
(*Clang, cold clang*),
Stone on stone, with iron bits,
Clamped together, (*Clang, clang*),
Iron twisted till it fits—
Notched and jammed and bolted fast—
Rearing heavily and slow
One monument against snow;
A monument to last, a tomb to hold
Yellow pollen of all past
Against the cold.

Until, in the end, comes twilight glimmer:
Voices, faces, motions dimmer,
Breath as low
As the all-covering snow;
Even the evening and the morning laid
Cheek to cheek, will fade—
Radiance and sound made one
And quieted and blended into none.

ON THE EARTH AND UNDER IT

THE VAST HOUR

All essences of sweetness from the white
Warm day go up in vapor, when the dark
Comes down. Ascends the tune of meadow-lark,
Ascends the noon-time smell of grass, when night
Takes sunlight from the world, and gives it ease.
Mysterious wings have brushed the air; and light
Float all the ghosts of sense and sound and sight;
The silent hive is echoing the bees.
So stir my thoughts at this slow, solemn time.
Now only is there certainty for me
When all the day's distilled and understood.
Now light meets darkness: now my tendrils climb
In this vast hour, up the living tree,
Where gloom foregathers, and the stern winds brood.

TO A MAGNIFICENT SPINNER, MURDERED

Gnats and an ant have gnawed your nimble bones—
You who could spring and sprawl on your own thread
Down half the meadow. Under tiny stones
The ant has stored your essence. You are dead.

You stitched the air with level darts: the sun
Slid on your silvers. Now they slant oblique
Like strokes of rain. . . .

Your neighbors have begun
 To chew the cud of festoons. From the cheek
 Of this, your hairy enemy, dangles one
 Loop of his glee to tease your skeleton.

Wasps sting the grapes still, carry spider-spoil
In twisted torment past your web and on
Where their crude honey hangs in muddy cones.
The ants are hurried. One huge bee intones.
The pond is wrinkled with a velvet oil
Where gnats will hatch, with dusk, another spawn.

DEAD MAN

Sap stirs near me, roots stretch and seize,
Sundering stones.

And rivers waken, start in monotones
Their later tunes.

Oaks bend their knotted knees
In labor, and the full earth groans
Like women big with their increase;
While underground my body lies,
With open eyes,
In this stiff pose of peace.

HUNCH-BACKED VOLCANO: 1914

Red is the mouth of Pele, passionate
Against the fires of the kindling stars:
Fire to fire moves: the heavens wait
As low to earth comes crimson-dripping Mars:
They kiss in thunder, shudder, suffocate—
Below men pause and listen, at their wars.

TWENTIETH CENTURY SLAVE-GANG

We who have seen the city's sentinel—
Some iron-colored tower, monument
To slow encroaching force—our thews are bent
Against her girders! With her noise, her knell
From this our iron tongue we toll, to tell
Torture and toil. Her children are content;
They sleep behind her spears, belligerent—
Until they start in terror. . . .

Toll the bell:

*Prepare, prepare to see your towers fall;
Foundations groan, no longer to withstand
The burdens of your abundant banquet hall.*

*So perished Babylon. Behold the hand
That turns your river underneath the wall
And makes your wealth an avalanche of sand!*

REVOLUTION

What husks of last year's winter close you in,
To-morrow's world—what dead, what wrinkled skin
Of ancient parchments, laws, beliefs! what dried,
Worn, tattered layers keep the life inside,
Where slender as a sword, and tender green
It trembles, pushes, patient and unseen:
Vibrating atom, fronded silken thread,
Some day to shake, to sunder back the dead
Two halves of hemispheres—to pierce the crust
Of ages' rubbish, crowns and cults and dust!

See, iron arms, that clutter all the wide
Plateau of liberty—see, fortified
Dull spikey towns—you cannot hold your own
Against one seed a fecund earth has grown!
Alarmed you stand, alert to meet your foe,
Ready to battle blow for thundering blow;
Nor do you see this sprout of common wheat,
The blade, between your firm implanted feet.

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